

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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FM AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0931

S E C R E T NICOSIA 0236

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PFOR CY

SUBJ: DEMONSTRATION AND ATTACK ON EMBASSY, JANUARY 18, 1975

REF: NICOSIA 0234

1. IN VIEW MOUNTING TENOR JANUARY 17 DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST BRITISH OVER TURKISH CYPRIOT REFUGEE EVACUATIONS, EMBASSY EXPECTED DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST BRITISH HERE AND, WE ASSUMED, AGAINST OUR MISSION AS WELL. DEATH OF GREEK CYPRIOT STUDENT DEMONSTRATOR WAS PLAYED TO HILT BY GREEK CYPRIOT MEDIA THUS ASSURING JANUARY 18 DEMONSTRATIONS WOULD HAVE VIOLENT OVERTONES. SHOOTING AT BRITISH CONSULAR OFFICE EVENING OF JANUARY 17 WAS FURTHER INDICATION OF UGLY MOOD.

2. EARLY JANUARY 18, STUDENTS BEGAN FORMING UP AT VARIOUS SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND MARCHING TO OBVIOUSLY PRE-ARRANGED LOCATION POINTS. CROWD OF TWO TO THREE THOUSAND GATHERED AT BRITISH CONSULAR OFFICE ABOUT 0900 HOURS. EMBASSY'S SPECIAL POLICE DETAIL WAS MONITORING PROGRESS OF MOB. BRITISH BUILDING WAS ENTERED. MOB RAMSACKED AND BURNED SECOND STORY OFFICES. FROM THERE ENLARGED CROWD MARCHED TO DOWNTOWN LOCATION OF BRITISH COUNCIL, WHERE IT BROKE WINDOWS AND SCATTERED FILES. ONE DEMONSTRATOR WAS SHOT IN LEG. CROWD THEN MARCHED PAST NEARBY AMERICAN CENTER LIBRARY, TRIED TO GAIN ADMISSION, WAS UNSUCCESSFUL AND PASSED ON WITH ONLY MINIMAL DAMAGE TO DISPLAY WINDOWS.

3. WE RECEIVED WORD FROM OUR POLICE MONITORS AT APPROXIMATELY
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1020 HOURS THAT CROWD WAS HEADING FOR EMBASSY. I CALLED MINISTER

OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS CHRISTOPHIDES AND MINISTER OF INTERIOR VENIAMIN AND REQUESTED MORE POLICE AND IMMEDIATE PROTECTION FROM NATIONAL GUARD. MOB HIT AT APPROXIMATELY 1045 HOURS, QUICKLY FORCED WAY THROUGH REAR AND SIDE GATES INTO EMBASSY COMPOUND. WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS, POLICE STOOD BY AND WATCHED. MARINE SECURITY GUARD DETACHMENT BEGAN THROWING TEAR GAS GRENADES (160 WERE THROWN TODAY.) WE ESTIMATE AS MANY AS THREE THOUSAND PERSONS WERE AT AND NEAR EMBASSY. FIVE POV AND OFFICIAL VEHICLES WERE BURNED. MOB TORE OFF SHUTTERS FROM NW RPT NW CORNER OF CHANCERY (HEALTH UNIT), ENTERED AND SET IT AFIRE, THEN ENTERED AND RAMSACKED COMMERCIAL SECTION. APPROXIMATELY SEVENTY CYPRIOT POLICE AND NATIONAL GUARD BEGAN, VERY SLOWLY, TO DISBURSE CROWD UNTIL AREA CLEARED BY ABOUT 1200 HOURS. AT 1230 HOURS EMBASSY RECEIVED WORD OF SECOND DEMONSTRATION FORMING. CROWD OF ABOUT FIFTEEN HUNDRED HIT AT 1240 HOURS IN REPLAY OF FIRST ATTACK. TWO OFFICIAL VEHICLES, PARKED SOME DISTANCE FROM THE EMBASSY, WERE SINGLED OUT AND BURNED. SECOND ATTACK DEVELOPED WITH REMARKABLE RAPIDITY. THOUGH SHORTER AND CAUSING LESS DAMAGE, IT SEEMED TO BE THE MORE DANGEROUS BY REASON OF REPORTS THAT DEMONSTRATORS HAD PREPARED MOLOTOV COCKTAILS FROM NEARBY GAS STATIONS. DECISION TO EVACUATE ALL BUT COMMUNICATIONS AND MSG PERSONNEL WAS MADE WHEN RIOTERS APPEARED READY TO SET FIRE TO GROUND FLOOR OFFICES IN SEVERAL PLACES.

5. REACTIONS OF MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS CHRISTOPHIDES AND MINISTER OF INTERIOR VENIAMIN WERE CORRECT BUT NOT CONVINCINGLY RESPONSIVE AS FIRST ATTACK WAS SHAPING UP. I WAS TOLD THAT REPORTS FROM POLICE ON SPOT INDICATED THAT SITUATION WAS UNDER CONTROL. GOC UNQUESTIONABLY KNEW THAT MAJOR DEMONSTRATION WOULD TAKE PLACE AT EMBASSY: IT MUST ALSO HAVE BEEN AWARE, IN MY JUDGMENT, THAT CROWD WAS UGLY AND INTENT UPON INFLICTING SERIOUS DAMAGE. IN FAIRNESS, GOC PROBABLY RECKONED THAT WITHOUT MAJOR RIOT CONTROL EFFORT, WHICH WOULD BE POLITICALLY UNPOPULAR IN PRESENT CHARGED ATMOSPHERE, MOB COULD NOT BE SUCCESSFULLY PREVENTED FROM WORKING ITS WILL. CYPRUS RADIO PLAYED LIGHT MUSIC MOST OF DAY.

6. IN SUCCESSIVE CALLS TO TWO MINISTERS OVER NEXT THREE HOURS THERE SEEMED TO BE INCREASED RECOGNITION OF DANGER, AND STRONG NATIONAL GUARD CONTINGENT WITH ARMORED CARS FINALLY ARRIVED. WHILE GOC

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CHOSE TO ACQUIEYME IN FIRST STAGE, DIMENSIONS OF SECOND ATTACK SEEMED TO BE UNEXPECTED AND WAS PROBABLY MORE THAN THEY BARGAINED FOR. WE HAVE SOME INDICATIONS THAT THIS SECOND ROUND MAY HAVE BEEN INSPIRED BY LYSSARIDES AGITATORS.

7. ARRIVAL OF UNFICYP ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS WAS MOST WELCOME, SINCE HAD EMBASSY BUILDING BEEN SET AFIRE, THERE WOULD HAVE

BEEN NOWHERE TO GO EXCEPT OUT INTO THE MOB WITH QUESTIONABLE HELP FROM POLICE AND NG IN STORE. PRESENCE OF UNFICYP ARMOR AND NG REINFORCEMENTS, PLUS SOME DETERMINED INDIVIDUAL EFFORTS ON PART OF OUR SPECIAL POLICE DETAIL, DISCOURAGED MOB, AND AFTER ABOUT ONE HOUR IT DISPERSED.

8. UNFICYP ACTED WITH POLITICAL SKILL TODAY. WE HAD ALERT-ED CHIEF OF STAFF EARLY IN DAY TO POSSIBILITY OF VIOLENCE, AND AT PROPER TIME HE COMMENCED TO CALL OUR SITUATION TO ATTENTION OF GOC OFFICIALS, WHICH FITTED IN WITH OUR OWN REQUESTS FOR PROTECTION. THE UNFICYP APC'S, THEREFORE, WHEN THEY DID ARRIVE, CAME "IN CLOSE COOPERATION WITH MINISTRY OF INTERIOR" RATHER THAN AS UNILATERAL UNFICYP MOVE, WHICH MIGHT HAVE PROVED EMBARRASSING.

9. TODAY'S ATTACK PROVES ONCE AGAIN HOW UNRELIABLE CYPRIOT SOURCES OF INFORMATION ARE AND HOW EVENTS CAN RAPIDLY TAKE UNEXPECTED TURNS. WE CONTINUE TO HAVE REPORTS THAT GROUPS FROM LIMASSOL PLAN TO MOVE TO NICOSIA JANUARY 19 OR 20 TO MOVE AGAINST EMBASSY, AND HIS HAS BEEN PASSED TO CHRISTOPHIDES. HE ASSURES ME THAT ROADBLOCKS ARE IN PLACE AND THAT SPECIAL SECURITY PRECAUTIONS IN THIS REGARD HAVE BEEN TAKEN. WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO ASSUME, HOWEVER, THAT THERE WILL BE FURTHER DEMONSTRATIONS- IF NOT TOMORROW THEN JANUARY 20, AND THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO WAY TO FORECAST WHAT COURSE THEY WILL FOLLOW. I HAVE THEREFORE MOVED ALL EMBASSY PERSONNEL AND DEPENDENTS TO NEARBY HILTON HOTEL FOR NEXT THREE DAYS. BOTH CHRISTOPHIDES AND GREEK AMBASSADOR DOUNTAS HAVE TOLD ME THAT THIS IS WISE MOVE IN VIEW OF IRRATIONAL ATMOSPHERE OF THE MOMENT.

10. AS FOR GOC'S SINCERITY IN PLEDGING MAXIMUM EFFORTS TO PREVENT FURTHER PHYSICAL ATTACKS AGAINST EMBASSY, MY LATE CONVERSATIONS WITH CHRISTOPHIDES (AND DOUNTAS) INDICATE THAT
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SECRETARY'S MESSAGE HAS HELPED.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, REFUGEES, CIVIL DISORDERS, EMBASSIES, EVACUATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975NICOSI00236
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750020-0689
From: NICOSIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750140/aaaabixb.tel
Line Count: 156
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 75 NICOSIA 0234
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 MAY 2003 by Izenbel0>; APPROVED <08 MAY 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEMONSTRATION AND ATTACK ON EMBASSY, JANUARY 18, 1975
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, CY, US, UK
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006